

Testimony IN SUPPORT OF HB 5534: An Act Concerning the Practice of Naturopathy

March 6, 2016

Dear Co-Chairs Sen. Terry Gerratana and Rep. Matt Ritter and Public Health Committee Members,

My name is Dr. Robin Russell and I am a Naturopathic Doctor. I opened a private practice in Canaan, which is in a very rural area in Northwest CT, a little over a year ago. Many of my patients are from Canaan or the surrounding towns where there is very little access to healthcare. Many of my patients have asked me to be their Primary Care Doctor in which my response has always been, “I can provide some aspects of Primary Care but not all since Naturopathic Doctors do not have prescriptive authority in this state”. It is so disheartening to tell patients this when in neighboring states, they can establish a Naturopathic Doctor as their Primary Care.

It is very important that I stand here before you testifying today in **support of HB 5534** because of my background and experience. I am a Naturopathic Doctor who practiced in Washington State for over 8 years where I had Full Prescriptive Authority. I have the experience of working as a Primary Care Doctor where I wrote prescriptions: antibiotics for ear infections, Dexamethasone for croup, EpiPen Jr. for bee sting allergies, Levothyroxine for Hypothyroid, Mupirocin for MRSA diaper rashes, administered nebulized Albuterol in-office for wheezing, and administered CDC recommended vaccinations at all routine Well-Child visits.

Naturopathic Doctors are trained as Primary Care Doctors in Family Medicine. We are trained in disease prevention, assessment, diagnosis, and treatment. While our emphasis is on disease prevention through nutrition, lifestyle, and vaccinations, we are also trained in disease treatment using diet and nutrient therapy, botanical medicines, and pharmacology for those times where higher level intervention is absolutely necessary.

Over the past year in Canaan, I’ve had to refer many patients for medications, medication dosage adjustments, and childhood vaccinations which resulted in an additional cost to insurance and the patient, time, inconvenience, and largest risk of all is the patient not following through on my referrals.

The residents of Connecticut should have the ability to choose who to receive their comprehensive care with as they do in other Prescriptive Authority states such as VT, NH, ME, DC, AZ, CA, HI, ID, KS, MN, MT, OR, UT, WA, etc. I had the privilege of raising both of my children (who are now 7 and 11 yrs. old) under the care of a Naturopathic Doctor from birth while I lived in Washington.

I ask that you **support HB 5534** An Act Concerning the Practice of Naturopathy to help provide more access to healthcare in the state of CT especially rural communities, provide CT state residents the opportunity of being able to choose who they want for their healthcare, help reduce the incidence of acute and chronic disease in our state, and help reduce overall costs to insurance and patients.

Thank you Co-Chairs and Public Health Committee Members for listening to my testimony.
Sincerely,

Dr. Robin Russell